

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 476 683

JC 030 291

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TITLE Towards a Global System of Credit Transfer.
PUB DATE 1999-00-00
NOTE 8p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Articulation (Education); Community Colleges; *Educational Mobility; Exchange Programs ; *Institutional Cooperation; Transfer Policy; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

This paper introduces a system of Program Alignment that Community Colleges for International Development, Inc. (CCID) member institutions across Australia, Canada, Europe, and the United States of America can use to facilitate a system of credit transfer. The rationale for this project is drawn from the increasing importance of internationalization to institutes of higher education worldwide. The author asserts that an important aspect of the free flow of students among and between countries, institutions and programs, is a structured system of articulation and the mutual recognition of qualifications. To facilitate the establishment of a seamless system of education, the author calls for the establishment of an Institutional Accreditation Team and an Articulation Task Force charged with reviewing the teaching and learning capabilities of any institution seeking articulation of its programs into the CCID network. The Principles of Accreditation endorsed by the National Vocational Education and Training authorities would be used to guide the program alignment process. These principles include (1) identified industry training/market need; (2) course standards; (3) competency-based education/training; (4) multiple entry and exit; (5) flexible learning; (6) articulation; (7) customization; (8) access and participation; (9) appropriate assessment; and (10) ongoing monitoring and evaluation. (RC)

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Towards a Global System of Credit Transfer

by
Alan Silver and Paul McQuay

Introduction

This paper introduces a system of Program Alignment that Community Colleges for International Development, Inc. member institutions across Australia, Canada, Europe and the United States of America can use to facilitate a system of credit transfer. It initiates a process of curriculum alignment that can be utilized by Colleges, Universities, Ministries of Education and manpower training staff across national borders. The program alignment model proposed herein will provide opportunities for students to experience other cultures and educational venues through a defined process.

Rationale

The importance of internationalization to institutes of higher education worldwide continues to increase at a rapid rate. "Global education can no longer be viewed as a secondary consideration; we must recognize that it is central to developing graduates who can cope creatively in a modern independent world."¹

This Program Alignment Project is an attempt to establish processes and methodologies to enable students from Australia, Canada, Europe and the United States and internationally to move from country to country and campus to campus. A secondary consideration is the enabling of students from other countries to move easily into institutes of higher education in Australia, Canada, Europe and the United States.

An important aspect of the free flow of students among and between countries, institutions and programs, requires a structured system of articulation. Additionally, mutual recognition of qualifications will be required by CCID members.

Project Objective

The major objective of this project is to develop a seamless system of education across post secondary institutions in Australia, Canada, Europe and the United States of America. It is recognized that there are major differences between systems of education and training. However, there is also enough commonality to enable the educational process to begin in any of the countries at institutions and within programs that complete the process.

A seamless system of education provides a mechanism for CCID to pursue:

- Agreement by member institutions to further encourage best practices approaches to mutual recognition for periods of study abroad.
- Develop articles of principles for approaching mutual recognition of academic and vocational qualification.

Institutional Accreditation

There are a number of key elements that need to be taken into account by any body formed to accredit institutions and programs within them. The process could begin with an Institutional Accreditation Team (IAT) visit to an institution seeking articulation of its programs into the CCID network of institutions. The IAT would review the capability of the Institution to provide education and training that is able to be recognized for credit transfer from institution to institution.

The IAT would ensure that the institution's teaching and learning capability was adequate to achieve the stated educational objectives. The specific measure to be reviewed by the IAT would include:²

- The establishment and maintenance of relevant policies, procedures, resources and learning support programs and services.
- The development and conduct of teaching and learning programs consistent with the institution's Goals and Objectives.
- The development and maintenance of systems and processes for the regular monitoring and review of performance and resource needs.

This would infer a teaching and learning strategy that would satisfy the needs of clients to develop people for employment, leadership and life. The key client/stakeholders would include:

- Students
- Graduates
- Staff
- Industry
- Community Groups
- Industry Training and Advisory Boards
- Government bodies
- Other educational institutions
- Professional bodies
- Overseas institutions and government bodies

If the IAT accredits an institution it would then pave the way for that institution to set up a program alignment project with any institution affiliated with the CCID network. It would mean that the IAT could go into any country in the world (e.g. Bulgaria, Turkey, India, etc.) and make an assessment of the capability of that institution.

If the IAT is satisfied that the institution has the capability to articulate its programs into the CCID system, then the next step should be to set up what the Transfer Articulation Task Force Report in Arizona calls an "Articulation Task Force" (ATF)³ which would comprise faculty and/or department representatives in the discipline/program area that the institution assessed identifies. The IAT would in all probability suggest CCID member institutions that would wish to get involved in a program alignment project and play a supportive role in its implementation. This may mean CCID nominating a CCID representative on the ATF.

The ATF would initially have to concern itself that the project has a good chance of success by ensuring that:

1. The leadership of the two institutions involved fully supports the program alignment project.
2. Faculty and/or Departments involved at both institutions are totally committed.
3. Industry advisory groups providing advice and support to the course at both institutions are prepared to get involved and work together.
4. The two institutions involved are prepared to provide adequate resources for the project.

International Accreditation Alignment Principles

If the issues outlined previously are satisfied then the project could commence. Some major principles that the ATF might wish to establish at both institutions might be along the lines of the

Principles of Accreditation endorsed in Australia by the National Vocational Education and Training authorities.⁴

The principles would require the institutions involved in the program alignment project to establish that:

Accreditation Principle 1: Identified Industry training/market need.

There is an identified industry training need/market for the program at both institutions. This will require industry/professional bodies to be involved in the program alignment process. The vocational/educational outcomes of the courses being aligned will need to be clearly stated.

Accreditation Principle 2: Course Standards

The course standards are consistent in both institutions reflecting the requirements of particular credentials. This would mean setting out minimum requirements for:

- Qualifications(s)
- Matching nomenclature
- Entry requirements

Accreditation Principle 3: Competency Based Education/Training

The courses being aligned have defined learning outcomes to be attained and standard of performance required and the learning outcomes are appropriate to industry, occupational needs according to advice from industry or the needs of a specified client group.

Accreditation Principle 4: Multiple Entry and Exit

The ATF would identify the point of which participants can exit with education/vocational outcomes recognized for employment in the countries involved in the alignment project. The course alignment documents must describe arrangements for recognition of prior learning (RPL).

The process for recognizing prior learning will provide for:

- Assessment of evidence of the accumulated learning experiences of an individual in relation to the required competency
- Applicants to provide evidence as to how their prior experiences relate to the required competencies of the selected course
- A range of techniques to assess accurately the competencies held

- Support mechanisms to encourage and facilitate applicants' use of the process
- Clear criteria for deciding whether or not to grant recognition and
- A review phase

Accreditation Principle 5: Flexible Learning

The courses being aligned have identifiable delivery modes that are appropriate at each institution. The ATF will need to identify those support mechanisms that are necessary for maximizing participant's completion of courses.

Accreditation Principle 6: Articulation

This necessitates the ATF documenting the following:

- Transition arrangements when the courses aligned are replacing and/or adding to existing courses.
- Details of credit transfer and/or articulation arrangements with other relevant accredited courses.
- Pathways to higher level courses are set out clearly e.g. from Community College of University (USA-Canada), TAFE College to University (Australia).

Accreditation Principle 7: Customization

The ATF must provide guidance on the extent to which a course may be modified from country to country and still satisfy particular industry/enterprise/participant group needs. Rules for selecting and substituting modules will need to be very clearly specified.

Accreditation Principle 8: Access and Participation

Course entry requirements must not contravene relevant State and Federal anti-discrimination legislation and where barriers to entry are identified, an appropriate rationale is provided.

Accreditation Principle 9: Appropriate Assessment

Assessment across institutions should be:

- Compatible with competency-based training
- Flexible in its approach
- Valid
- Reliable and
- Provide for the recognition of prior learning

Accreditation Principle 10: Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation

Institutions must describe the mechanisms to:

- Actively monitor course outcomes and their relevance to industry practice and technology
- Monitor the continued appropriateness of delivery strategies, course materials and customization arrangements and
- Monitor and develop credit transfer and articulation arrangements

The Process

In 1997 a working group was formed following Drafts 1 and 2 with coordination being carried out by Dr. Paul McQuay (USA), Dr. Michael Hatton (Canada) and Alan Silver (Australia).

The following institutions took part in the initial project:

Australia	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
Canada	Humber College
USA	State Center Community College District
	Brevard Community College
	University of Hawaii Community College
	Delaware County Community College

Suggested Curriculum areas to be aligned were decided in July 1997, and included:

- Once the twinning has been determined, the faculty will be selected.
- Having selected the faculty, based upon curriculum, a sharing of the curriculum will be initiated (pre-visit to RMIT). This will be accomplished on the Internet.
- Once in Melbourne (at RMIT) the actual ladders and lattice arrangement will be developed.
- During the curriculum-planning phase in Melbourne, Hatton/Silver/McQuay will document the process and write an article for publication.

This model (process) will serve as a guide for others within CCID, initially, to engage in a similar alignment arrangement.

Suggested Timeframe

We should begin this process as soon as possible with an aim to conduct the alignment and documentation process at RMIT in the latter part of 1997.

References

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2. RMIT Educational Program Improvement Group "Teaching and Learning Strategy Paper VET", 1997, p 4
3. Arizona Board of Regents and State Board of Directors for Community Colleges of Arizona "report of the Transfer Articulation Task Force", October 20, 1996, p 2
4. State Training Board Victoria "Course Accreditation Application Guide", (endorsed by the Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board --July 1994)



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EFF-088 (Rev. 2/2001)